

**INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS OBSERVER  
PRE-REPORT ON**



**OPERATION SILENCE  
STOREY OF LAL MASJID  
With reference to  
Extremism and Human Rights**

(With due acknowledgement to all local newspapers)

International Human Rights Observer (IHRO) is registered human rights organization working together with Governments, United Nations and other International institutions to promote and protect the basic fundamental human rights of the masses declared in the universal charter of human rights of United Nations to build a global village of lasting peace, social, and economic justice and development for the 21st century.

### **Background:**

The late father of the Ghazi Brothers 'maneuvered' to get the leadership (Khitabat) of Lal Masjid and Jamia Faridia. Equally interesting would be to know why Masjid and madrasah were respectively named as Lal Masjid and Jamia Faridia. It was the late Field Marshal Ayub Khan, the country's first military ruler, who got appointed late Maulana Abdullah as the prayer leader of Lal Masjid, on the advice of his spiritual guide, Pir Sahib of Deval Sharif.

Jaafar Brothers, one of the leading industrialist groups of the country who had constructed Jamia Faridia, in order to show reverence to the great Sufi Saint Khawaja Ghulam Farid named the seminary after him. The then secretary CBR, Syed Hassan Akhtar, handed it over to the Maulanas. The land for Jamia Faridia was allotted during the late Gen Zia's regime.

This was due to the blessing of Pirs that Lal Masjid Maulanas could manage to take over these religious seats. A graduate of Jamia Binnoria, Karachi, late Maulana Abdullah landed in Rawalpindi soon after President Ayub Khan took the decision to shift the capital to Islamabad. He took oath of allegiance to the then Pir of Deval Sharif, Muhammad Abdul Majid. This was a significant move on part of a Deobandi Maulana.

Pir Sahib Deval Sharif helped Maulana Abdullah in his appointment as Khateeb of Lal Masjid. The Auqaf Department later took over Lal Masjid, but Maulana's religious dynasty kept on flourishing unhindered. It was during Zia regime that Jamia Faridia was established. As the story goes, a partner of 'Jaafar Brothers' dreamed that he was at the tomb of Khawaja Ghulam Farid and that a river full of water was flowing around. He shared the dream with Syed Akhtar Hassan, the-then secretary CBR, and sought his interpretation of the dream.

Akhtar termed the dream as a good omen and advised him to build a seminary and name it after Khawaja Ghulam Farid. Jaafar did accordingly. Akhtar helped him acquire the land from the government of late Gen Zia. Admiral (ret'd) Muhammad Sharif, whose son-in-law (Sha'aban Shoukat) these days is running a massage center (spa) in Super Market, had then allotted this land. Interestingly, Lal Masjid brigade had raided an alleged prostitution den and then a massage center. However, the massage center of Sha'aban Shoukat was not touched. Sha'aban was a CBR officer and left the CBR job to start this apparently lucrative business. The CBR secretary handed over the management of the Jamia to Maulana Abdullah and since then the seminary has been under the command of the family.

After his assassination, his sons Abdul Aaziz Ghazi and Abdul Rashid Ghazi took over the mosque.

In 2006, the leaders of the mosque, Abdul Aaziz Ghazi and Abdul Rashid Ghazi, started to challenge the writ of the government in the capital of Islamabad, by setting up Sharia judicial system, and by instigating scores of incidents of kidnappings of people accused and convicted of un-Islamic activities. By the start of year 2007, the students of Lal Masjid, on the will of the administration of the annexed madrassa, Jamia Hafsa, started public preaching on ethics according to Islam and Sharia.

They have started to challenge the writ of the government in the capital, by setting up parallel Taliban style judicial system, and by instigating scores of incidents of kidnappings, arson, and murder. In recent statements, Ghazi openly threatened the government with suicide bombings. Some high profile incidents include:

- Kidnapping of ten Chinese nationals, several law enforcement officials, women and children
- Destruction of public and private property
- Taking over children's library
- Terrorizing people and businessmen

A seemingly soft approach taken by the Pakistani government in dealings with the mosque led to accusations of leniency on the part of General Pervez Musharraf.

## **CONFLICT BETWEEN GOVT. LAL MASJID ADMINISTRATION**

### **July 3, 2007**

On July 3, 2007, a gun battle erupted between the supporters of Lal Masjid and Pakistani security forces when some students from the madrassa Jamia Hafsa seized some wireless sets and weapons from Rangers deployed in a nearby picket, while a procession of female students was ongoing before the security forces. As part of this, police fired tear gas shells to disperse the students. Meanwhile some students opened fire on Pakistan Rangers deployed nearby resulting in the death of one Ranger at the spot. Upon this, cross-firing started, leaving 9 dead on the spot and about 150 injured. Among the dead were some students, a TV news channel cameraman, a business man and some other passers-by. Within minutes, security forces cordoned off the area and a state of emergency was declared in the capital's hospitals. The siege started that led to many other incidents. Approximately 150 students attacked a nearby Ministry of Environment office building setting fire and damaging and ablazing many vehicles.

### **July 4, 2007**

Authorities announced an indefinite curfew on the students of the mosque in Sector G-6 of Islamabad, where Lal Masjid is located. A command was issued to shoot anyone coming out of the mosque with arms.

**Deadlines:** The Pakistani government announced frequent warnings and deadlines in an attempt to resolve the issue. The government offered those inside the mosque who exit unarmed Rs. 5000 (\$83; £41), and free education. Women inside the mosque were also offered safe passage to their homes. The deadline was regularly extended as mosque leaders employed a strategy of allowing a certain amount of students to surrender during the passage of each deadline, requiring security forces to renegotiate an extension.

**First deadline:** Government authorities announced the first deadline for students and persons present inside the Lal Masjid to surrender unconditionally by 1530 Pakistan Standard Time (PST).

**Second deadline:** The Government further extended the deadline by half an hour to 1600 PST.

**Third deadline:** A further extension was observed until 1800 PST.

**Fourth deadline:** A fourth deadline was announced until 1930 PST.

**Fifth deadline:** Authorities further relaxed the deadline until 2130 PST.

The head of the mosque, Maulana Abdul Aziz, was captured attempting to leave disguised in a burqa after the fourth deadline. After Aziz's capture, approximately 800 male students and 400 female students of Jamia Hafsa surrendered to the authorities.

### **July 5, 2007**

Before dawn, Pakistani troops set off a series of explosions around the mosque. While fire was exchanged throughout the day, the clashes apparently stopped.

Extension of deadlines continued on July 5th too with a strategy of the government to evacuate the mosque and annexed madrassa (Jamia Hafsa) before the final operation takes place. Interior Minister Aftab Sherpao announced at a press conference that it was believed that 300-400 students remained in the mosque, 50-60 of whom were "militants". However, the statements from government authorities were controversial and according to surrendering students about 2000 students are still inside.

Abdul Aziz's younger brother, Ghazi Abdul Rashid, has been negotiating with a government mediator. He claims that he and the remaining students would be willing to exit the mosque and lay down their arms provided the government stopped firing upon them and granted them amnesty. However, government officials are sceptical that Abdul Rashid will honour his word. In his one of the telephone interviews with one of live transmissions of Geo TV on Thursday, July 5, 2007, Moulana Ghazi Abdul Rashid

denied all charges on him and said he was innocent. He further negotiated with the government to deal with him on safe passage and no harm to his companions inside besides taking care of his ailing mother. However, government asked him to surrender unconditionally along with his armed students.

### **July 6, 2007**

Siege continued on July 6th too. Meanwhile many negotiation offers were held between the besieged Lal Masjid administration and the government authorities without positive outcome. Meanwhile cross firing continued between the two parties. 21 more students surrendered before the authorities, 2 students were killed during cross-firing. Government is strategising to give more time for safe evacuation of the students from the besieged mosque and annexed madrassa before the final showdown.

### **July 7, 2007**

**Ultimatum** President Pervez Musharraf issued an ultimatum of Saturday evening, after militants whose association with the besieged Masjid is unknown fired anti-aircraft guns at the President's plane as it took off at Islamabad airport. Security forces captured two anti-aircraft guns along with a machine gun on a roof top of an Rawalpindi high rise, just a mile away from the airport. However, government asserted that the fires were heard minutes after the President's plane took off. No clue to the incident is still known. However analysts say it may be a retaliation to ongoing operations against Lal Masjid and the government's continuing efforts against terrorism and Talibanization in Northern Waziristan.

Moreover, Pakistan army took control over the operations replacing the paramilitary troops who were earlier deployed near the premises. One child, aged 13 was successful to escape from the besieged mosque.

### **July 8, 2007**

The boundary wall of Lal Masjid and the Jamia Hafsa collapsed following heavy gunfight between the Pakistan Army and the Islamists. On the other hand, Maulana Abdur Rashid Ghazi says they are not going to seize and that they have enough weapons and rations for about a months time. Six armed students of the mosque were arrested by the security forces when they were fleeing the battle zone by opening gunforer, while army chppoers also made several sorties over the Lal Masjid and Jamia to monitor the inside activities. SSG Commander Lt. Col. Haroon-ul-Islam, who was leading the operation, lost his life late Sunday night. Commander Haroon-ul-Islam was injured and rushed to CMH hospital in the Friday operation where he succumbed to his injuries.

### **Death Toll**

As of July 8, 2007; the reported death toll figured at over 24, as the cross-firing continues between the suspected militants and security forces. The death toll is based on the casualties reported and confirmed by the authorities outside Lal Masjid.

### **July 09, 2007**

President Pervez Musharraf directed the officials to be careful about the sanctity of the mosque during the Lal Masjid operation. He said a delegation of Ulema (scholars) should hold talks to settle the issue. The police here have sent another batch of 128 surrendered students of Lal Masjid to the Adyala Jail, which has taken the total of such students in this jail at 468, of whom, 152 were shifted to the Sports Complex yesterday for handing them over to their parents. Lal Masjid's Naib Khateeb, Abdur Rashid Ghazi (ARG) has expressed his agreement on holding talks with the seven-member Ulema committee.

### **July 10, 2007:**

#### **Negotiations failed:**

The operation was launched as soon as ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Q President Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain in a brief nationally televised press conference said talks to find out a peaceful solution to the standoff had failed.

Hussain said he was never disappointed so much in life that an agreement could not be reached even after the government showed maximum flexibility

The Wafaq-ul-Madaris on Tuesday held the government responsible for failure of talks with Maulana Abdul Rashid Ghazi and said that the federal ministers were issuing misleading statements in this connection.

The draft agreement reached during the meeting between the prime minister, Ulema and ministers was amended in the President House, which resulted in the failure of the talks," the Ulema of Wafaqul Madaris said while addressing a joint press conference.

### **OPERATION UNDERWAY**

At least 70 persons, including Lal Masjid deputy cleric Maulana Abdul Rashid, were killed and over 130 injured as security forces stormed the Lal Masjid-Jamia Hafsa complex and fought a daylong face-to-face battle with militants on Tuesday.

The operation launched at 4 am, could not be wrapped up till the Wednesday dawn. About 70 explosions were heard in a short span of time and SSG commandoes entered the Lal Masjid complex under the cover of heavy shelling by the security forces.

## **Response from Political Parties**

Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto said Musharaf that had taken the right decision over the mosque siege, but added she was “frightened for the future of the people of Pakistan”.

Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) chief Altaf Hussain commended the role of the armed forces, particularly the special services groups (SSG), and other officers and Jawans of the Pakistan Army who participated in the operation against Lal Masjid.

MMA called for three days moans and uleme convention. They declared that government is responsible for killing of hundred of innocent students, women of Jamia Hafisa and Lal Masjid.

PTI also condemned the operation.

## **President Musharaf order the Operation Silence**

It was reported by newspaper that President of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharaf ordered the launch of operation silence while keeping the prime minister and his cabinet uninformed of this decision.

## **Supreme Court’s Orders**

Supreme Court declared on Tuesday that it couldn’t stop the Lal Masjid operation. According to article 245 court’s authority is limited after army taking the leadership of country. But Supreme Court ordered the administration to put forward the correct data of injuries and killing of people in Lal Masjid and Jamia Hafisa. Government should inform the families of students about the deaths and injuries of their children.

## **Last interview of Mullana Abdul Rasheed Ghazi:**

During his last interview with private TV channel Geo, he said, “We will not surrender. We will be martyred, but we will not surrender, we are more determined now”.

## **July 11, 2007**

Reports from last night indicate 3 more militants were killed in exchange of fire, and another security force official was also killed in cross fire. Operation is almost complete, with the clean up second phase already in progress in some parts of the complex.

67 dead bodies were buried in H-11 graveyard. Media personal were told to be taken into the complex sometime later in the afternoon. According to government officials all illegal structures in the Lal Masjid compound, which were established on illegally, occupied

state land would be demolished after the operation is complete. Meanwhile the city is slowly returning back to routine life, however at this time there were no confirmed reports of relaxation in curfew in the affected areas of G-6 sector where the complex is situated. Citizens are advised to take caution traveling in eastern parts of Blue area, and sectors G-7 and G-5.

### **International appreciation for President Musharaf:**

US President, Mr. George W. Bush appreciated President Musharaf efforts to control the extremism and terrorism in country. He said his country would work together with Pak government for the promotion of democracy in Pakistan.

All the world leaders from United Kingdom, Australia, India, and Denmark have appreciated his efforts for war against terror.

Punjab Bar council condemned the Lal Masjid operation saying that only teachers, students, women and children killed in it. Karachi bar court's resolutions declared president of Pakistan risk for the security of country.

Government released the Ume Hassan and her daughter Ume Tabbiya for their participation in burial of dead body of Mullana Abdul Rasheed Gahzi. The dead body of Ghazi was taken to Roghan Mizari with his brother Mullana Abdul Aziz in helicopter.

### **Misreporting by Intelligence Agencies:**

According to newspapers, Minister for religious affairs, Mr. Ijaz –ul-Haq said that the reports of intelligence agencies of presence of suicidal bombers and landmines were false.

## **Human Rights Violations in Lal Masjid Operation**

IHRO took notice of following human rights violations that occurred during this operation silence over Lal Masjid.

### **Rights of Media**

It was learnt that during the operation silence security forces have taken the control of hospitals i.e. Ploy clinic, CDA hospital, PIMS. They imposed heavy restriction on entry in these hospitals for journalists from print & electronic media. They told the reporters

that the army men have orders of shooting journalists at sight. IHRO also took notice of sealing down Islamabad Press Club. There were reports of arresting journalists from Islamabad including Mr. Aqeel-ul-Rehman from Daily Islam. It was learnt that Mr. Javed Islam, Daily Markaz died in these crisis.



(An old man cries for his trapped son in Jamia Hafisa)

### **Misery of lost Students of Jamia Hafisa and Lal Masjid**

Parents of hundred of students were seen restless and crying over the lost of their children. IHRO observed that families were uninformed of their children's deaths and injuries during the operation silence. The families demanded to stop the operation for the security of their dear ones.

### **Burial of dead body of Mullana Abdul Rashid Ghazi**

There were reports of clearing dead body of Mullana Abdul Rashid Ghazi in government departments. Despite the will of late Ghazi and his family government hand over the dead body to burry in his native village Roghan Mazari. Family members i.e. wife, sisters and other relatives have rejected the government decision to burry the dead body in Roghan Mazari.

### **Protection of family of Mullana Abdul Rasheed and Mullana Abdul Aziz:**

IHRO feel that the remaining family of Mullana brothers should be protected and provide all their legal rights. They should not be threatened to deaths for the action of their father and uncle. According to reports Ms. Jamila Ahmed, sister of Mullana Abdul Rashid Ahmed filed an appeal to Supreme Court that they are receiving death threats from unknown people in case of their contact with media.

### **IHRO's Press Conference:**

IHRO organized a press conference and requested Lal Masjid administration and government to cease fire for the safety of innocent students insight the mosque and Jamia

Hafisa. Dr. Khalid Aftab Sulehri called upon the peaceful solution of this dispute. The press conference held on 9<sup>th</sup> July one day before the silence operation.

## Press Clippings



## Conclusion

IHRO believes that violation of power brings more destruction in form of violations of human rights in society. We feel that all the conflicting issues with Lal Masjid administration should have been solved peacefully through dialogues to keep the honor and respect of mosque. Moreover, misuse of power should be abstained by government and individuals at any cost.